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## Interview with Ralph and Estella Burba (FA 98) - September 30th, 1977

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Interview with Mr. and Mrs. Ralph Burba about basket weaving. Recorded on Friday, September 30, 1977, at their home in Edmondson County on Union Light Road, near Wax community.

Code for speakers: B. is Mr. Burba; Mrs. is Mrs. Burba; RH is Roger Hall; and H is Deborah Hall

Burba: You take what they call--like an ice pick--a (stauball) they call it. They take that and they punch that in the splits and make a hole and sharpen these ribs off real sharp, not too far back, but just slope them and then they stick them in where they will all come level, see, on the bottom as they come around. That's the way you do it.

II B  
II C

Hall: You said that your dad used to make them?

Burba: Yes, my dad made them.

Hall: What was his name?

Burba: Henry Burba.

IC

H: Did he make alot of them?

B: Yes, he made several. He made baskets a long time. Then my aunt made them. They made all their life.

II E

H: Did they learn from their parents?

B: Yes, I guess they did.

H: Did your dad make a living by making baskets?

B: No, not all together. Making ties--cross ties, for the railroad. Made them. Baskets. All that kind of stuff, to buy what they eat.

VIII

H: Well, did they sell the baskets, or did they trade them?

B: They'd sell them and peddle them. They'd take a big basket-frame full. It'd hold 2 or 3 hundred--maybe 4--and go way yonder to different counties and sell them. Towns.

III A.1  
B.3

H: Did your dad go and sell them or did...?

IC

B: Yes, my dad went once or twice. With them.

H: That would have been interesting. What--horse and wagon I guess?

B: Yes, that's what they went--horse and wagon. Take a big basket-frame with standards about 6 or 8 feet high, spread out at the top.

III B.3

H: Just stack them in there?

B: Fill it full. They done them baskets up about--lets see--two, four, about six to a bunch. Either four or six.

Roger Hall: Did the people back then do most of their basket weaving during the winter time?

I

B: Yes, and summer too.

RH: They just done it all the time then?

B: Yes, when they weren't working the crops they was on the baskets.

H: One person wouldn't make that many baskets too sell, would he?

B: No, not one, they'd just get up, they'd just buy some from you and some from me and get a big bunch and peddle them.

H: Did the peddler, the one that peddled them, did he make baskets too?

B: No, maybe didn't make none. Just done that as a hobby, see. To make money.

H: How much--you said you sold them for 20 cents?

B: I got 20¢ a piece for them.

H: Did you make big ones, or what? Any size?

B: I made bushel baskets; a bushel basket.

H: Did you ever make any of the smaller ones?

B: No, a bushel is all I made.

Mrs. B: You made a half-bushel.

B: Yes, I made a half-bushel.

H: What did they use them for?

B: On the farm, you take them to the barn and carry your corn in them, and feed. Why, use them for a dozen different things. Go to the garden and pick beans, and get them full of beans.

H: That's what I needed this summer for my garden.

B: Yes sir, that's the truth. Put a handle on them and put your arm through it and go on with it.

H: I just wondered what all they used them for because you never see them any more.

B: No, they're all done now.

H: I'd like to have some baskets, because I can think of several things I could use them for.

III A. 4

IV. A

IV C

B: I don't know, I may try one this winter.

H: I would like to.

B: If I can find something to make it out of, I might try. I've been laying off to do it. My son-in-law wants me to. Different ones.

H: How long does it take to get the wood ready and everything?

B: Well, not too long if you can find the right kind of timber, and it wasn't too bad.

H: You use hickory for...?

B: If you cut down a hickory tree big enough, no telling how many hoops you can get out of it.

H: Well, what do you use for the...?

B: Splits? White oak. Young white oak. Split it up and get it down to the width you want it and rive it. Take it and rive it open, thin--you can rive it thin as paper. Scrape them. Scrape them down smooth.

H: Then they would be flexible?

B: Yes. If I had something, I could show you a whole lot, but anyhow, I know what they look like and I made them. I guess I might have made two dozen. I don't know. I made a bunch or two and then sold them. Well, I seen I wasn't going to do much good at that. I got something else to do and I quit that. My dad, him and my mother both, they made them--lots.

H: How old were you when you were making baskets?

B: Oh, I was, when we were first married wasn't it?

Mrs. B: Not right when we first married. We'd been married about (5) years.

B: I was about thiry? About thirty years old.

H: What year was that?

B: 1930.

H: Was it in 1930?

B: 1930. Or before. I've been here a long time.

H: Yes, a while. Maybe I will too.

IIA

IC

IC

B: I'm 79. 79 years old.

H: You don't look it. Not anywhere near that.

B: I was at meeting one time and told how old I was and they said "Was you aim to tell them?" and I said "Yeah, I didn't care. He said "I can't believe." The doctor told me that. You see, I was born in the 1900's.

H: Yes, I guess you were, weren't you?

B: 1898. No wonder I've seen basket making.

H: That's right.

B: Eighteen and ninety-eight. I've seen everything from here back.

H: You've seen a lot of changes.

B: Too much. You'll never see them. My children won't see them.

H: That's right.

B: If they outlive me, they'll see some things that I never did see yet. I don't know though, they've just about went as far as they're going.

H: Very likely.

B: Just about done.

H: Do you mind if I smoke?

B: No, go ahead. No, I'm using tobacco now on account of my jaw tooth, it stopped it the other night. Keep it on there. Strong tobacco. Don't nothing else do no good.

HH: See this piece of furniture?

H: Yes.

HH: He made it.

H: You're kidding! You made that?

B: Yes, I made it. I made this.

H: No doubt you could make a basket then. That is beautiful.

B: No use fooling with baskets when you can make that. I made that table and the 2 end tables and this one.

I

V?

V?

(6)

H: Maybe you could have sold that if you had made it back when you were making baskets.

B: Oh, if I'd had them tools back then when I was young.

H: Roger is building...

B: I don't know at the gun cabinets, now that's solid walnut and this is solid walnut. Every gun cabinet I made except a few was made out of walnut--every bit of it. You can't find that walnut now.

H: How did you learn to do that?

B: I just picked up a catalog and looked in it. That's exactly the way I done it.

RH: I made my brother a gun cabinet, but I just made it out of pine.

B: I made 2 or 3 out of pine. Prettiest things you ever seen. I wouldn't make a dime's difference in them. I swear I wouldn't. Wouldn't make a dime's difference in them. It looks just like the walnut anyhow.

RH: Right. It all depends on what color you stain it, what it looks like.

B: I don't know. I built all them kitchen cabinets.

H: He's building my kitchen cabinets now.

B: Is he?

H: That's what he could be doing instead of out here. My dad was a cabinet maker too.

B: I know, it's a job, but they've all got workshops now. I work at it when I feel like it. When I feel like it I come in and sit down. I don't have to be in no hurry... No, you'll find a few people here that knows about this basket making.

H: You didn't go on one of the trips, did you?

B: What?

H: When they went peddling them?

B: No, I didn't go on no trips. Too small back that time. Too young. That was way back when I was just a boy when they done that. I heard them tell it that a fellow by the name of Lyde Thomas Childress and my uncle took a big load in a basket-frame and they went up in moonshine neighborhood. And said

IC

III B.2

got in there and some of them told them "You'll never get through that place." Sid, yeah, they'd get through. Said that out come a bunch of drunks, staggered right out in front of them in the road and sid, "Did you know you was in God's country?" That was old man Will (Ronway?) He looked around and said "I don't know. I know we ain't seen none of his people." Well that whole crew commenced laughing and helped him sell that load of baskets.

III B.2

H: Well, he lucked up there, didn't he?

B: He was brave anyhow, old man Will.

H: Who was he?

B: Will Donavon. He was a basket maker. That's all he ever done. And peddle them too. Yeah, that's the days now that we come up through. Them kind of times. That there was plenty to eat and you eat what you made. You didn't buy much out of the store cause you didn't have no money. Didn't have no money. But now there's a carload of money and it don't buy much.

IC

H: That's the truth. Do you know of very many people that made baskets? You said alot of them out here did. Did alot of the people you know or grew up with..?

B: Yeah, my relations made them. Wadells. There was one that lived right up here in this house on the right as you go out. The white house on the right. He made baskets for a living. Jesse Wadell.

H: Does he have any relatives that still make baskets?

B: Well, his dad made them, his brothers made them.

H: And you were talking about the Alvey's. Have you lived in this part of the country all your life?

B: No there ain't none around here.

Mrs. B: She said had you lived here all your life?

B: No, I lived in Louisville. I was born in Hart County over here, not too far. Moved here in '14 and stayed here till '20, went to Louisville and stayed till '29 then come back to Grayson and made baskets over there, didn't I?

Mrs. B: Yes.

H: You made more baskets than you thought you did, I think.

B: I did. I remember making some over there. Went back to Grayson and stayed three years, and then come back here in '32 and been here ever since then. Bought this place.



H: I like this.

B: Everybody comes in here likes it and we didn't like it when we first bought it.

H: Our driveway is about a mile and a half long, and ours is the very last house there. I like it.

B: Well, I'll tell you. The less you see of some people the better off your are. I like friends, but I'll tell you right now. . . People ain't got no confidence anymore. Confidence is gone. They got money and say I don't need you. I tell you I'd rather have friends than all the money that could be stacked up. I would, I'd rather have freinds than all the money around. I lived in a simple day. I come up back in the '30's. When Roosevelt came in. '34 on through '37 - '38. I bought this place in '38, and from then on stuff just kept a climbing. I worked in Louisville, made \$9 and something a day. Back in '37 that was money. Just kept a going, keep a raising, kept a raising, and I carpentered, I guess, for 25 years. Carpenter work. So I never was out of a job, but I got out of basket making.

H: Into something more profitable?

B: Yes, got out of basket making. We tried it. We might near had to. Might near had to do it. Because there wasn't nothing else to do, and they would buy them, for the harvest. They didn't much want them, but they bought them. Trade, take it in the store.

H: Would the store pay you for them?

B: In what you bought. Then they got a profit. See they got the basket cheaper when you traded them, and you might near had to do it.

H: You said they'd make you wait until last?

B: Yes sir, wait till last before they'd even ask you what you wanted.

H: That's awful.

B: Awful? I'm telling you just like it is.

H: I don't doubt that.

B: That old lady, I'll tell you about that. Do you know what she did? She wanted me to talk with her and record it. Well...., Walter Logsdon is her daddy, I mean her daddy-in-law. See, she married Walter's boy, married Willie Thompson. She's a Doyle. No, the Doyle woman was Walter's wife's sister.

IA

IC

VIII

III.A.3

III.A.1

V.A.4B

That's the way it was. Flossie Doyle. You may know her.

H: No, I don't think so.

B: Now she was on that same job that you have. She came out here and wanted me to tell her everything I could.

H: Well, that's what I want. Do you know anymore stories like the one you were telling about the guy on the peddling route?

B: No, I don't know no more. I know several of them that took the trip, what they called basket peddling. Lots of them used to do that regular. Take a team.

H: Did they have to have a special wagon?

I.B.3 B: No, they just had a road wagon. What they used to call it. Take a good road wagon and make a frame for it. Maybe that frame would be 25 feet long and high, as high as this ceiling. Just stack them full of baskets. Barely could get through the big road, in places. They'd take them and when they'd hit a place to sell them they'd start selling them.

H: Just anywhere they could find?

B: Yes, anybody that wanted to buy one.

H: Would they just go until they sold them all and then...?

B: Just go until they sold out and then come back.

H: You might could drive for a long time.

B: You wouldn't go very far today, though.

H: I guess that's right. No one has them now. Well, would they spend the night ~~places~~ or what? When they would go on these trips.

B: Spend the night? Yeah, they'd take the night with people.

H: Just along the road?

B: Along the road. Just see somebody and spend the night with them.

RH: How long did it take to make a bushel basket?

B: Well, it didn't take me then, I guess it'd take me a--did I do one in a day?

Mrs. B: I think we'd do about 2 or 3 a day.

III.B.3

III.B.5

II.C

II.A

B: Maybe 2 or 3 a day. You see the first thing you done, you got out your timber. Split it all out, the ribs, the hoops and prepare your split timber for your splits. Get all this ready, enough to make maybe a dozen or two. Well, you'd work so long, may shave out so many hoops, then you'd split out so many ribs so you'd start whittling the ribs and whittle out enough for 2 or 3 baskets. You'd make 2,3,4 hoops and put them together, then you'd get your split timber and rive it out. A great big bunch of split timber that big around, and scrape them and get ready and then when you'd start you could handle them.

II C

H: Did you have to have alot of different tools to use to do that?

B: No, all they ever used then is one of these here Barlow pocket knives. Used to have good ones, and they'd have them just as sharp as they could be. They'd shave the hoops with that drawing knife and then they'd take and put the ribs up where they'd bend good, and they'd take them sharp knives and whittle them down. And then they'd take this thing I'm talking about that's just like an ice pick, had a wooden handle on it just like that, and just start in pushing that in there and turn it around till it made a hole to stick the rib in. Then turn it right around to the other side and stick it in the other side.

II B

H: Did you have the tools to do all that when you started or did you have to buy them?

B: I had them. I could have made that one.

RH: Was the wood cured out, or did you work it green?

Mrs: We worked it green. That is the only way it would work. you had to work it green or it would break.

II C

RH: I thought maybe you soaked it in water or something.

Mrs: If it did dry out you had to soak it in water, those that you were working with.

B: I've got the drawing knife here. It's a souvenir too. It's an old knife.

H: I bet that's right. They'd be kind of hard to find now.

B: See them drawing knives is what they shod horses with. Just take up a horse's foot between your legs, and take the shoe off, and take that knife and whittle, cut the hoof down and put the shoe on.

II B

H: I didn't know that.

B: Yeah, that's it. That's what they done. Then take a horseshoe nail and nail them on. Clinch them. I done a whole lot of that, shoeing horses.

HH: You've been a jack of all trades.

B: Yes, sir. Blacksmithing, working on wagons. I done all of that. Making wagon wheels.

H: And all of it was easier than making baskets?

B: Every bit of it. That basket business, it didn't take me long to wind up with that. It was too nerve wracking. I'd just. . .

H: Did you say there was a shop up here somewhere that sold them?

Mrs: On Mammoth Cave road. Alvey's store. He has a great big bunch of them there all the time.

B: It's a souvenir stand. It's right on this side of where you turn in the turnpike. Like you was going to the cave, see? Like you was going to Mammoth Cave. Right on this side, on the left. Right back in a hole what's been blasted out. He's got a store in there, and baskets hanging out there and everything.

H: Then he probably bought them from people around here?

B: Yeah, he gets them right over here. That's where he used to live.

H: At Wax?

B: Yeah, at Wax.

H: How do you get to Wax?

B: You go right up here to the road where you turned down, go right up that road and keep it until you get to Dog Creek Boat Ramp. Go on out to 88 and turn left, and it wouldn't take you ten minutes to go over there.

H: When you get off the gravel road do you turn right or left?

B: Turn left. No up here you turn right. You ain't got no gravel road till you get the the Y, they call it.

H: Well, out your drive here.

B: You go out till you hit the blacktop--not it ain't--you got a gravel road to the bridge. Dog Creek Bridge. The bridge, then when you cross the bridge, you're on a blacktop then till you hit 88 and turn left.

H: And that takes you to Wax?

B: Takes you to Wax. When you get in sight of it you can see it. See the boats.

H: You said there were several around there that made baskets?

B: Yeah, they tell me they make them all over that country.

Mrs: Yes, they do make them down there.

B: They do it yet, cause it's higher now, and they get more for them than they used to. They make them yet.

H: I guess they sell better now?

B: Yes, they do.

H: Yet people don't use them like they used to.

B: I tell you, if you could see Alvey, Lee Roy Alvey, he could tell you all about everybody back in that country. He knows them all, see. They're all kin-folks of his. Lee Roy Alvey, right over here on the cave road, going to Cave City. Before you get there, before you get on the turnpike.

H: I might have to go by and see if I can find him.

B: There's where, that'd be your best bet.

Mrs: Yeh, but she doesn't want to go all the way over there, and come way back over here if she don't find Lee Roy.

B: I can tell you that I made them, and I have. But it's been so long. I could show you, I believe, but I can't do that without something to do it with.

H: Yes, that's a whole lot there. Who did you say you sold yours to, or did you say that you traded them at the store?

B: From the store. The merchants bought them.

H: Well, when you were making them did they still have the peddling trips?

B: Well, these guys would come along and buy, and they'd sell them to them, or they'd sell them to anybody they could. They'd just take them because they took it up in the store. And they'd give you something to eat for them. Give you 20¢ a piece for a bushel basket. That sounds awful, don't it?

H: It does.

B: 20¢ a piece. That counted going in the woods and cutting the timber, and riving it, and get it all, and making a bushel basket? You ain't seen nothing.

IB

VIII C

III.A.3

V.A

RH: That's what you call hard times.

B: Ain't seen nothing. I tell people about that today, they laugh at me.

H: No, they shouldn't.

B: A dollar then was worth a dollar, boy. It was as big as a wagon wheel. It's the truth. Now, I lived in this day. I lived in the 30's, '29. I had three reliable bankers in Grayson County to sign my note for \$50. Then when I went to sell my tobacco, I had to move over here, and they made me sell that tobacco in their name.

H: Oh no.

B: Afraid I wouldn't pay it.

H: That's terrible.

B: That's the truth. I never had no more use for them. That's what me and her has come up through and raised our children. Of course we didn't give them what people does now, but we give them all we could. We all made it. Didn't make much, but we made it. Wasn't no overhead expense, wasn't no insurance, nothing but your taxes on your land, and nothing else that you had to be out a-tall. Didn't have collectors around your door, nothing. Wasn't none. There wasn't none. You couldn't go no where and buy nothing on time. Now then you start out--I could start out today and I could buy more than I could pay in 40 years if I lived that long. Get ever bit of it. Get tractors, cars, anything. Beg you to borrow money. That's part of the difference now. These here higher up people nver went through that. But I tell you, history repeats itself. She could happen again and it could be worse. It would be.

H: Yes, we're not used to it now.

B: See, depression--inflation, you take inflation and depression, I believe that inflation would be worse. You see, there'd be plenty of stuff you could get, but you can't buy it. You go up here to the market if you ain't got no money and see what you get.

H: That's right.

B: Now these merchants that I'm talking about, my daddy was a merchant, he kept a store. Good. Sold groceries: flour, meal, coffee, sugar, all that. He'd buy baskets.

H: He did?

B: Yeah. Well, he was honest and he credited people. They wouldn't pay him. They couldn't pay him, and wouldn't pay him, and it broke him. He had to go out of business.

H: How long was he in business?

B: Well, I don't know. He was into it two or three different times, but he never made nothing out of it. Because he wasn't a crook. If you make anything in it you've got to be a crook. That's the truth of it. He couldn't make it.

H: Where did he have the store?

B: He had one here.

H: Right here?

B: He had one right down there. He had one there, and one in Hart County. Or two.

H: And he bought baskets?

B: Yeah, he bought baskets.

H: Well, did he ever--how did he sell them?

B: He'd sell them to some of these basket peddlers. Yeah, then they'd peddle them and get their money for them. He took his'n in trade. He did. He traded out in the store. I hope that people, these people of the younger generation never see what I've seen. I don't want to see no more of it. I was telling that lady about Waddell. He made good ones. Said they'd want to see if they was loose, the splits. They'd take their fingers this way and run through them and pull them open if they could. And said there he was over there with a little bucket, getting him a little bucket of lard, and said he'd wait on everybody else and never ask him what'd he want or nothing. And finally he'd have to tell him what he wanted. He told the truth about it. That was up there at Cub Run.

H: Who was that now?

B: My dad's half brother. He was a Waddell. Yeah, all the Waddells made baskets then. Everyone I ever knowed of made them. Not only them, but alot of people in this country. There used to be some of the finest timber in this country--hickory--to make them out of, but it's about all gone.

H: Where did they get it? Just anywhere they found it?

B: They had farms. It'd be on their farms. They'd cut it. We, on this farm, I guess some could be found, but there'd be plenty of split timber on this place. White oak. Get big hickory trees, cut that down and no telling the baskets one cut of it would make. Rive just as straight. No I had, I got started on making furniture, made pine furniture. All that stuff, and I've done pretty good at it. Kept the wolf from the goor.

H: That's what counts.

IC  
III.A.1

III.A.3

IC

III.A.1  
A.2

V.B

IC

II.A

VIII.B?

B: Yeah, that's right.

H: Well, what did you do when you quit making baskets, were you farming?

B: Yeah, farmed, tried to. Tried to farm with something wore out that nobody else wouldn't use. I finally made out to buy a turning plow, a corn rill, stuff like that to use and I worked in Louisville in 37 and I made good there. That kind of started us out and from then on we had pretty good. Tobacco bringing a little. My dad, right here, and my brother, he had an acre, 2 acres of tobacco. May dad had about an acre. They sold it, that was in the 30's, 1930. Dad's brought \$5, and my brother's brought \$13, and alot of it they wrote back for floor expenses. I sold 18 or 1900 pounds in New Albany that brought \$90. What would that bring now? 1800 or 2000, or 2500, which ever that was. They didn't want that. Didn't want it. Now they kept cutting it down.

2.  
VIII.8

RH: Do you raise dark tobacco in this part of the country?

B: Yeah, there's a tobacco base on this place.

Mrs: He said do you raise dark tobacco.

RH: Do you raise dark tobacco or burley?

B: Oh, burley.

RH: You don't raise dark tobacco?

B: No.

RH: We raise both down there.

B: No, I never did have no dealings with dark tobacco. I had a row of it this time. I aim to cut it back for chewing tobacco. I didn't put nothing on it, no poison. But don't seem like it tastes firey, some way or another. If I had something to put on it, it might be all right. It's pretty tobacco. What we call one sucker.

RH: Yeah, that's the same thing. I remember my grandpa, he used to twist it then he wouldn't chew it till it was a year old. He'd let it hang in the attic for a year. He always stayed a year ahead on his chewing tobacco.

B: Well, don't you make about as much out of that as you would the burley?

RH: You didn't used to.

B: It got more pounds, didn't it?



RH: Yes. This last time we sold our burley and it averaged about \$1.15, and our one sucker averaged about \$1.21.

B: That's what they wanted.

RH: It didn't matter whether it was the good leaf or the trash, it all brought \$1.21.

B: Well, it's got a whole lot higher, but I can remember when I sold it for 70% and a dollar would buy more than it will now at \$1.21.

H: Did you say that you learned how to make baskets from your dad?

B: Yeah, not only him but I watched others. Got the hang of it. Know about the length of the ribs, the hoops, and all to make a bushel basket. Or to make a half-bushel. They got to be different lengths, and of course, you sit around and watch people all time, you're bound to catch onto it.

H: Would people just get together and do that, or was it just in the family?

B: It was just in the family.

H: Would everybody work on them, or

B: Well, maybe somebody would come in that didn't care and would take hold of it and help them out.

H: How did your first basket turn out? Did it look pretty good?

B: Yeah, I guess the first I made looked just about as good as the others, didn't it?

Mrs: Yes.

H: Did you know how to make baskets before, or

B: Yeah, she worked them in, worked them splits in.

Mrs: I did all the finishing up.

H: You already knew how before you all made those?

Mrs: No.

B: Then when you got them done, to make a fancy job of it, you turned in on the bottom, the bottom of the hoops, where the splits cross it, on the bottom. You worked that in from one end to the other, see. Made it pretty. That way they'd last longer.

H: Did you dye any of them?

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B: Yes. Take you a bunch of splits and put dye on them. Red.

H: Did you buy the dye?

B: Yeah, red or green. Whatever you wanted to do. Make so many splits and put in so many of them among the white ones.

H: Well, how did you dye them? Did you just mix up the dye and let them soak in there?

B: Yeah, just mix it up and put them in it.

H: That'd be pretty.

B: Yeah. Maybe next time you come back, if you ever come back anymore, if you come back this spring, maybe I'll have one.

H: Okay.

HH: Get you interested in making baskets again.

B: If you was to get me started making baskets again, I'll kill you.

H: Oh, my goodness. Now don't get violent! It wouldn't be so bad if you weren't trying to do it to make enough money to live on.

B: No, not if you just done it for a hobby. But if you was doing that to live, boy, it'd be rough, wouldn't it?

H: It would be rough.

B: Well, if they'd give you 5 or 6 dollars a piece for them, it'd be alright.

H: Better than 20¢.

B: Yeah. Well I wouldn't doubt a bit that a fellow could get 4 or 5 dollars a piece for them now. I tell you where you can find out. You go over yonder where I tell you, to Alvey, Lee Roy Alvey. Used to run this store over here at Wax, and he sold out over here and put up that place of business down there. Souvenirs. They got anything in the world down there. Them baskets hangs on the outside. You could ask the price of them and see what the price was. The sizes, bushel basket, half-bushel, they've got them.

H: He doesn't keep them out all the time does he? The weather would hurt them.

B: No, under a shed, hanging on the outside of the house. No, he dealt in them baskets, I guess more than anybody. All his people back in there made them. When he had that store, he'd buy them and sell them, see. I thought he had a contract somewhere. This merchant did. He'd sell them baskets. No telling what he made on them. Made good on them.

H: He probably made more than the fellow that made them.

B: Lordy Mercy, yes. I tell you one of them Alveys, Ben Tom Alvey. Family. That's one family. Ben Tom. Ben Tom Alvey. Lives over there by Wax.

H: He makes them?

B: He made them all the time. You can find out over there, or over here more about basket making than anywhere I know to tell you. Cause all the people back in this country here. But they moved out. Growned up young. Now some of them's all people back there, see. They're still there. And if times hadn't got no better, I'd been at it.

H: You still would?

B: If I'd still been on it, you wouldn't have had to come no further than here.

H: You've told me an awful lot.

B: Well, I tell you all I could, but yet I could show you a whole lot better than I could tell you. But experience is what it takes. If you have experience with a thing, and know how it's done, why it's different. But you'll have a pretty good idea of how they'd be put together. Hoops, make 2 hoops and put them together. Tie, tie a wrapping around each hoop and make the solits cross it on the outside. Just start going around, down and around, whichever way you went, till you get just a bundle here on the side, and that's what you stick them ribs in. And them ribs, you stick them in till they all come level, measure and bend them till they all come smooth before you start working them in. Then you start in with little bitty fine splits, not too wide at first, then as you go on out, get wider. See, that little narrow solit will go in garther and do better than would a great big one. That's the way they're made.

H: Did you ever know anybody that made willow baskets?

B: Made what?

H: Willow baskets?

B: No, I've seen them, but I don't know of anybody around here that made them.

H: I just wondered.

B: I guess they'd be quite a job less if you get onto it.

H: It might. I don't know. It might be easier to get your materials ready to do it.

B: Yeah, you get that willow--I had a weeping willow, but I cut it down.

H: Why did you use hickory and white oak to make baskets instead of something else?

IIA

B: Well, you have that so it'll rive. You couldn't take nothing else and make them splits. Too tough. Young white oak. Why you can rive them splits till you can almost see through it. You couldn't get nothing else to bend. That hickory will bend. White oak will bend. Why there ain't no telling the basket timber that's on this place now.